

# De-Westernizing Communication Research

The rise of postmodern theories and pluralist thinking has paved the way for multicultural approaches to communication studies and now is the time for decentralization, de-Westernization, and differentiation. This trend is reflected in the increasing number of communication journals with a national or regional focus. Alongside this proliferation of research output from outside of the mainstream West, there is a growing discontent with communication theories being 'Westerncentric'. Compared with earlier works that questioned the need to distinguish between the Western and the non-Western, and to build 'Asian' communication theories, there seem to be greater assertiveness and determination in searching for and developing theoretical frameworks and paradigms that take into consideration, and therefore are more relevant to, the cultural context in which research is accomplished.

This path-breaking book moves beyond critiquing 'Westerncentrism' in media and communication studies by examining where Eurocentrism has come from, how is it reflected in the study of media and communication, what the barriers and solutions to de-centralizing the production of theories are, and what is called the next step.

**Georgette Wang** is Chair Professor in the Department of Journalism, National Chengchi University, Taiwan.

## Routledge Contemporary Asia Series

- 1 Taiwan and Post-Communist Europe**  
Shopping for allies  
*Czeslaw Tubilewicz*
- 2 The Asia-Europe Meeting**  
The theory and practice of interregionalism  
*Alfredo C. Robles, Jr*
- 3 Islamic Legitimacy in a Plural Asia**  
*Edited by Anthony Reid and Michael Gilsenan*
- 4 Asian-European Relations**  
Building blocks for global governance?  
*Edited by Jürgen Rüländ, Gunter Schubert, Günter Schucher and Cornelia Storz*
- 5 Taiwan's Environmental Struggle**  
Toward a green silicon island  
*Jack F. Williams and Ch'ang-yi David Chang*
- 6 Taiwan's Relations with Mainland China**  
A tail wagging two dogs  
*Su Chi*
- 7 The Politics of Civic Space in Asia**  
Building urban communities  
*Edited by Amrita Daniere and Mike Douglass*
- 8 Trade and Contemporary Society Along the Silk Road**  
An ethno-history of Ladakh  
*Jacqueline Fewkes*
- 9 Lessons from the Asian Financial Crisis**  
*Edited by Richard Carney*
- 10 Kim Jong Il's Leadership of North Korea**  
*Jae-Cheon Lim*
- 11 Education as a Political Tool in Asia**  
*Edited by Marie Lall and Edward Vickers*
- 12 Human Genetic Biobanks in Asia**  
Politics of trust and scientific advancement  
*Edited by Margaret Sleeboom-Faulkner*

- 13 East Asian Regionalism from a Legal Perspective**  
Current features and a vision for the future  
*Edited by Tamio Nakamura*
- 14 Dissent and Cultural Resistance in Asia's Cities**  
*Edited by Melissa Butcher and Selvaraj Velayutham*
- 15 Preventing Corruption in Asia**  
Institutional design and policy capacity  
*Edited by Ting Gong and Stephen Ma*
- 16 Expansion of Trade and FDI in Asia**  
Strategic and policy challenges  
*Edited by Julien Chaisse and Philippe Gugler*
- 17 Business Innovation in Asia**  
Knowledge and technology networks from Japan  
*Dennis McNamara*
- 18 Regional Minorities and Development in Asia**  
*Edited by Huhua Cao and Elizabeth Morrell*
- 19 Regionalism in China-Vietnam Relations**  
Institution-building in the Greater Mekong Subregion  
*Oliver Hensengerth*
- 20 From Orientalism to Postcolonialism**  
Asia-Europe and the lineages of difference  
*Edited by Sucheta Mazumdar, Kaiwar Vasant and Thierry Labica*
- 21 Politics and Change in Singapore and Hong Kong**  
Containing contention  
*Stephan Ortmann*
- 22 Inter-Ethnic Dynamics in Asia**  
Considering the other through ethnonyms, territories and rituals  
*Edited by Christian Culas and François Robinne*
- 23 Asia and Latin America**  
Political, economic and multilateral relations  
*Edited by Jörn Dosch and Olaf Jacob*
- 24 Japan and Africa**  
Globalization and foreign aid in the 21st century  
*Edited by Howard P. Lehman*
- 25 De-Westernizing Communication Research**  
Altering questions and changing frameworks  
*Edited by Georgette Wang*

# **De-Westernizing Communication Research**

Altering Questions and Changing  
Frameworks

**Edited by Georgette Wang**

 **Routledge**  
Taylor & Francis Group  
LONDON AND NEW YORK

504

K1-3.210

First published 2011  
by Routledge  
2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN  
Simultaneously published in the USA and Canada  
by Routledge  
270 Madison Ave, New York, NY 10016

*Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business*

© 2011 Editorial Selection and matter, Georgette Wang. Individual chapters,  
the contributor.

Typeset in Times New Roman by  
Pindar NZ, Auckland, New Zealand  
Printed and bound in Great Britain by  
CPI Antony Rowe, Chippenham, Wiltshire

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reprinted or reproduced or  
utilised in any form or by any electronic, mechanical, or other means, now  
known or hereafter invented, including photocopying and recording, or in  
any information storage or retrieval system, without permission in writing  
from the publishers.

*British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data*

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

*Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data*

De-westernizing communication research : altering questions and changing  
frameworks / edited by Georgette Wang.

p. cm.

1. Communication—Research. 2. Postmodernism. I. Wang, Georgette.

P91.3.D49 2010

302.2072—dc22

2010004112

ISBN 978-0-415-57545-4 (hbk)

ISBN 978-0-203-84659-9 (ebk)



2011: G-1035

S

10

# Contents

<i>List of illustrations</i>	x
<i>Notes on contributors</i>	xi
<i>Preface</i>	xiv
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	xvi

1 Beyond de-Westernizing communication research: an introduction	1
GEORGETTE WANG	

## PART A

<b>Eurocentrism in communication research: the problem and its contributing factors</b>	19
2 De-Westernizing communication: strategies for neutralizing cultural myths	21
MOLEFI KETE ASANTE	
3 Emerging global divides in media and communication theory: European universalism versus non-Western reactions	28
SHELTON GUNARATNE	
4 Globalizing media and communication studies: thoughts on the translocal and the modern	50
MARWAN KRAIDY	
5 Orientalism, Occidentalism and communication research	58
GEORGETTE WANG	

**PART B**

**The promises of focusing on the particular** 77

- 6 "De-Westernizing" communication studies in Chinese societies? 79  
PAUL S. N. LEE

- 7 To Westernize or not: that's NOT the question 93  
WEI-WEN CHUNG

- 8 Pitfalls of cross-cultural analysis: Chinese *wenyi* film and melodrama 99  
EMILIE YUEH-YU YEH

**PART C**

**From cultural specificity to cultural generality: the possibility of universal universality** 117

- 9 The geography of theory and the place of knowledge: pivots, peripheries and waiting rooms 119  
DAVID MORLEY

- 10 Journeys to the West: the making of Asian modernities 137  
GRAHAM MURDOCK

- 11 Moving beyond the dichotomy of communication studies: boundary wisdom as the key 157  
GUO-MING CHEN

- 12 Beyond ethnocentrism in communication theory: towards a culture-centric approach 172  
EDDIE C. Y. KUO AND HAN EI CHEW

- 13 Reconceptualizing de-Westernization: science of meaning as an alternative 189  
YALY CHAO

**PART D**

**Opportunities, limitations, and implications for future research 205**

- 14 Whither Eurocentrism? Media, culture and nativism in our time 207  
GHOLAM KHIABANY

- 15 The production of Asian theories of communication: contexts and challenges 222  
WIMAL DISSANAYAKE

- 16 The definition and types of alternative discourses 238  
SYED FARID ALATAS

- 17 After the fall of the Tower of Babel: culture-commensurability as a point of departure 254  
GEORGETTE WANG

- Index* 276



# Illustrations

## Figures

7.1	Context as that which surrounds	95
11.1	The paradigmatic assumptions of Eastern and Western cultures	160
11.2	The gap between East and West on paradigmatic assumptions	162
11.3	The continuum of the relationship between paradigmatic assumptions	162
11.4	The theotics model	164
11.5	The Chinese tai chi model	165
12.1	A Chinese knot as a graphic representation of the culture-centric paradigm	181
13.1	Spectral diagram of universality for communication theory	198

## Tables

3.1	East-West philosophical divides	36
5.1	The historical context of Occidentalism	62